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EXPERIENCE p32

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2009

# ORLANDO **Attractions** MAGAZINE

Volume 2, Issue 3 • April / May 2009  
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## IDOL IN ORLANDO

**YOU Could Be America's Next Big Star**

A **first-ever** duet by **David Cook & Carrie Underwood** helps kick off the opening of Disney's newest attraction,  
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**ON THE COVER:** *American Idol* winners David Cook and Carrie Underwood sing a duet at the world premiere of Disney's The American Idol Experience. Photo by Matt Roseboom.

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# Letters



**A**ttractions in Orlando offer visitors nearly any experience imaginable. Some rides take guests on adventures to another place or time, like traveling to Neverland in Peter Pan's Flight at Disney's Magic Kingdom or visiting a distant planet in Universal Studios' E.T. Adventure. Also available are thrills including riding in race cars, simulating skydiving or soaring over the ground on one of Orlando's many roller coasters. Shows provide exciting live entertainment featuring singing, dancing and plenty of great music.

Lately, however, we have noticed an increasing amount of interest in giving guests a taste of Hollywood stardom. With celebrities using Web sites, blogs, and even services like Facebook and Twitter to connect with fans, it's no wonder Orlando's theme parks are finding ways to bring the notion of celebrity closer to guests. Whether it's meeting your favorite movie or television star at a Universal Studios appearance, trying to become one yourself in The American Idol Experience, or just wanting to feel like a celebrity by booking a VIP theme park tour, Orlando is quickly becoming the next-best thing to going to Hollywood.

*Ricky & Matt*

**Ricky Brigante and Matt Roseboom**  
Publishers and Orlando Fans

## SOMETHING'S OFF KILTER

My husband and I love your magazine. We anxiously wait for it in the mail every other month. We are also huge Disney fans and have been going together for the 10 years we have been married. We were hoping that you could do a story on the best attraction at Epcot ... Off Kilter! They are such amazing performers and we would love for everyone else reading to know how awesome they are and to go check them out by the Canada pavilion.

Here is a picture of me and Off Kilter. I wanted to share one of my favorite photos of me and the guys.

Holly Granger  
Orlando, Fla.

**We also love Off Kilter. In addition to a future article, we'll have to record one of their songs sometime and add it to our online Videos page on [attractionsmagazine.com](http://attractionsmagazine.com).**

## DREAMLAND FLORIDA

Orlando and the Space Coast has been a dreamland since I was 10 (I am 42 now).

During the mid-'70s to the '80s I was in Florida, especially the Orlando area, once a year or once every two years.

After that, well, it was different. One

trip in 1996 and one marvelous one in 2006 with my wife, our two kids, her parents and her brother. We stayed 10 days and saw the STS-116 launch (we were invited by the commander). We hope to go back soon.

Your magazine is a living link to this dreamland for me. A mix of nostalgia and anticipation to go back.

Olivier Sanguy  
France

**We're happy to bring some Florida fun to those who can't get here as often as they'd like.**

## LOOK WHO'S HERE

First of all I just wanted to say your magazine is awesome. I look forward to every new issue. I just went to Disney World the week before Christmas and while at Animal Kingdom, I saw [Imagineer] Joe Rohde just walking around near Everest.

No one really seemed to notice him, but we sure did. He was very nice and didn't mind stopping to talk with us for a few minutes. I just think it's awesome to see the Imagineers right in the park.

Jared Wagner  
Picayune, Miss.

**You never know who you'll run into at the theme parks. In addition to the Imagineers, you'll often spot celebrities filming at the parks or on vacation.**



## WHO'S AFRAID?

Here's a "ridiculously rare" character photo from Walt Disney World. The Big Bad Wolf was taken in the Magic Kingdom around 1995.

Gordon Free  
Freeland, Wash.

**Yes, he is a pretty rare one, but he still makes appearances. In an online search we found some pictures of him from last September. It seems around Halloween, especially during the Halloween parties, is a good time to spot him.**

**A good place to sometimes find rare characters in the Magic Kingdom is in Mickey's Toon Town, around the corner from the Judge's Tent.**

## HUGE EPCOT FAN

First off congratulations to the two of you on producing a wonderful, first-rate magazine. I thoroughly enjoy each and every issue and read it cover to cover. I, too, would like to add my voice to the chorus of other subscribers who were not saavy enough to get in "on the ground floor" and express my strong hope that you will reissue your first magazine on the 25th Anniversary of Epcot. As a huge Epcot fan I would really like to add this edition of *Orlando Attractions Magazine* to





my collection.

Here in snowy and cold Maine, it's great to open the mailbox and find a little Florida sunshine. Keep up the good work and I look forward to your announcement that volume one of the magazine will be available for those of us who missed it the first time around.

John R. Kidder  
Orono, Maine

**We've been keeping track of those who've asked about getting our first issue.**

**We do still plan to make it available in one form or another.**

### LEAVE ME ALONE

While at Animal Kingdom, I caught this gorilla chewing on leaves. I raised my camera and it looked at me as if to say, "Leave me alone, I'm trying to eat here!"

Stanley Spruce  
Lanse, Mich.

**He was just trying to make you think that's what he was thinking. But he told us he's actually a bit conceited and loves the attention.**



## THEN...



Frequent visitors to Disney's Hollywood Studios over the last ten years remember an attraction called "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? - Play It!". Of course, the park was called Disney-MGM Studios when the attraction based on the popular *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* TV game show was still around. It opened in 2001 and remained popular for several

years, as guests found the near-recreation of the actual game show to be quite entertaining. It was so perfect that a few tapings of the TV show were even held there. Plus, it offered guests a chance to win a trip, initially to New York and later aboard a Disney cruise ship.

The attraction's popularity slowly faded until it closed in 2006 to make way for Toy Story Midway

## AND NOW.



Mania, which is currently housed in the same building where the former game show set was located. But with the opening of The American Idol Experience elsewhere in the park, Disney's Hollywood Studios has brought an even bigger and more exciting authentic television experience to park guests, now offering them the prize of a chance to sing their way to stardom.

### SCARED OF GOOFY?

This is one my favorite Disney World pictures. My husband, Mark, acted like he was scared on Goofy's Barnstormer. My children, Jessica and Jason, are the two in front on the roller coaster.

Jodi Rugg  
Aurora, Ill.



### CHIPGRACEDALE

I just think these are cute. This is my daughter Grace at our trip in September of 2008.

Bobby Waters  
Springfield, Ga.

**Spinning rides are a great place to get shots of your kids. The spinning blurs the background.**



## WRITE TO US!

We want your letters! If you have any **comments** about the magazine, **questions** about traveling to Orlando, or fun **stories** or **pictures** to share, simply head to [attractionsmagazine.com](http://attractionsmagazine.com) and fill out the contact form or e-mail us directly at [info@attractionsmagazine.com](mailto:info@attractionsmagazine.com).



# Vacation Planner



## APRIL



**Through May 31** The **International Flower and Garden Festival** will be held at Epcot.

**Through May 3** **Jim Henson's Fantastic World** exhibit will be on display at the Orange County Regional History Center.

**4 MC Hammer** will perform during Mardi Gras at Universal Studios.

**4 - 5 A Spring Art Festival** will be held in Celebration.

**5** Old Town will host the **Florida LX Club**, featuring the "LX" Platform of vehicles from Dodge and Chrysler.

**11 Trace Adkins** will perform during Mardi Gras at Universal Studios.

**17 - 19 FX Show 2009**, a toy and comic convention will be held at the Orange County Convention Center.

**18 Nelly** will perform during Mardi Gras at Universal Studios.

**18** The **2nd Annual Spring Meet car show** will be held at Old Town. More than 70 MR2s participated in the inaugural event last year.

**18 - 19** Celebration will host their **Exotic Car Festival**.

**22 - 23 Flumpa and Friends Live** will be at Silver Springs.

**22 - 26 Romantic Times' Book Lovers Convention** will be held at the Wyndham Orlando Resort.

**25 Universal's Grad Bash '09** will take place starting at 7 p.m. at both Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure.

**25** New music artists will mix it up with alternative sports athletes as the **Journeys Backyard Barbeque** makes a national tour stop outside The Florida Mall.

**25 - 26 The Great American Pie Festival** will be held in Celebration.

## MAY

**1 - 2** WDW Celebrations will celebrate the **20th anniversary of Disney's Hollywood**

**Studios** with fan meets and events. Visit [wdwcelebrations.com](http://wdwcelebrations.com) for more information.

**1 - 2 Universal's Grad Bash '09** will take place starting at 7 p.m. at both Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure.



**2** More than 25 Hall of Fame astronauts including Buzz Aldrin and John Young will gather to induct three Space Shuttle commanders into the **U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame** at Kennedy Space Center.

**2** The **Central Florida & Suncoast Smarts car show** will take place at Old Town.

**3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Latin Sundays** will take place at Old Town with a live Latin band, party beads and authentic Spanish food.

**9 Glory at the Gardens** contemporary Christian concerts will take place at Busch Gardens. Scheduled to perform are Relient K, NEEDTOBREATHE, This Beautiful Republic, Worth Dying For and Sanctus Real.

**16 Glory at the Gardens** contemporary Christian concerts will take place at Busch Gardens. Scheduled to perform are Steven Curtis Chapman, Matthew West, Brandon Heath, Sara Groves and Joel Aue.



**May 22-24, 29-31 Star Wars Weekends** will take place at Hollywood Studios.

**30 Waves of Glory**, Battle of the Bands for Christian bands will be held at Wet 'n Wild.

## JUNE

**5-7, 12-14 Star Wars Weekends** will take place at Hollywood Studios.

**6 Saturday Nite Cruise 19th Anniversary** will be held at Old Town.

**12 Retro Game Night** with an array of classic board and video games will be held from 7 p.m. to midnight at the Orange County Regional History Center.

**12 Friday Nite Cruise 11th Anniversary** will be held at Old Town.

**15 - Aug. 9 Sounds Like Summer live concert series** takes place at Epcot.

**June 15 to 21:** Stayin Alive (Tribute to the Bee Gees)

**June 22 to 28:** Hotel California (Tribute to the Eagles)

**June 29 to July 8:** Slippery When Wet (Tribute to Bon Jovi)

**July 9 to 19:** Bjorn Again (Tribute to ABBA)

**July 20 to 26:** Sounds of the Supremes (Tribute to The Supremes)

**July 27 to Aug. 2:** 2U (Tribute to U2)

**Aug. 3 - 9:** Petty Theft (Tribute to Tom Petty)

**20** Wet 'n Wild will host its **10th Annual Fiesta San Juan** from noon to midnight.

**27** The **Colgate Country Showdown** musical semi-finals will be held at Wet 'n Wild.



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# Work in Progress?

## Tomorrowland Celebration

LOCATION: MAGIC KINGDOM

■ STATUS:  
UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION



Emerging between Space Mountain and the Carousel of Progress is **Stitch's Supersonic Celebration**, an interactive dance party of sorts that will allow park guests to celebrate with Stitch live via a large video screen. While this sounds like it might be a small attraction, the scale of the above-pictured building is likely larger than you think, rising nearly as high as the former Skyway building located just behind it.

## No Hot Air Yet

LOCATION:  
DOWNTOWN DISNEY

■ STATUS:  
UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION



The confusion over what to call the upcoming Downtown Disney balloon ride has been cleared up thanks to a new sign outside of the construction site. It appears that the attraction is called **Characters in Flight** and will be operated by a company called Aerophile, which runs many similar attractions around the world. You can find more information on Aerophile at [aerophile.com](http://aerophile.com).

## Perform No More

LOCATION: MAGIC KINGDOM

■ STATUS:  
UNDER  
DEMOLITION



With Stitch virtually moving into Tomorrowland hosting his own daily celebration and dance party, it seems that Disney no longer felt a need to keep the futuristic land's theater around. So the **Galaxy Palace Theater is now being demolished**. If you were part of any of the hundreds of school acts that performed to a small crowd of parents and friends, you might shed a tear. If you weren't, you likely didn't even realize this theater was tucked away next to Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin. Rumor has it that the theater will be replaced with... a Disney cast member parking lot.

## Virgin Was-a-store

LOCATION:  
DOWNTOWN DISNEY

■ STATUS:  
CLOSING



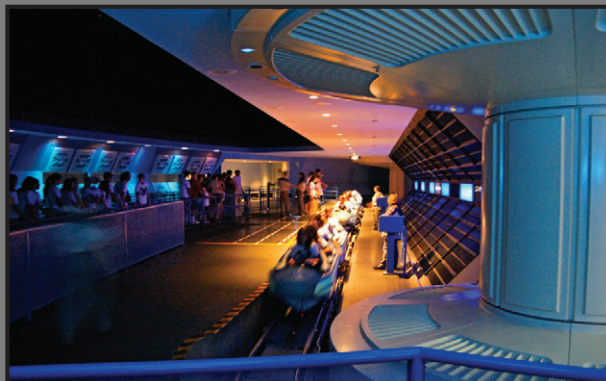
Fans of music, movies, books, and apparel will be disappointed to learn that **all Virgin Megastores in the United States are closing**, including the one prominently featured at Downtown Disney. No word as to what will move into the large space, though rumors of ESPN Zone taking over DisneyQuest have been around for several years, so perhaps the rumor mill will simply shift this idea a few stores over. Regardless of the replacement, guests have until May 31 to get some last-minute shopping done.



## Your Flight Has Been Delayed

LOCATION: MAGIC KINGDOM

Even more changes are taking place in Tomorrowland with **Space Mountain closing for refurbishment on April 19**. The refurbishment will last several months and include a number of enhancements to the overall experience of blasting off into space, though much of the ride's basics will remain the same.



■ STATUS:  
REFURBISHMENT

## Move It, Shake It, Blast It

LOCATION: MAGIC KINGDOM



The Magic Kingdom's **new Move It, Shake It, Celebrate It street party** has been partying its way up Main Street and around the hub in front of Cinderella Castle. Fans of Hannah Montana / Miley Cyrus will not want to miss this new parade as a few of Cyrus' songs are blasted during its entrance. Those who are not fans of loud, thumping music may want to stay away.

■ STATUS:  
RUNNING DAILY

## Trendy Tren-D

LOCATION: DOWNTOWN DISNEY

The latest complete addition to Downtown Disney is a store called **Tren-D** which features organic loungewear, embroidered handbags, jeweled sunglasses and other trendy accessories. Most of the merchandise will be exclusive to this store which, unfortunately, was opening on the day this issue went to print, so you'll need to visit our blog online at [attractionsmagazine.com](http://attractionsmagazine.com) to see what the inside looks like.



■ STATUS:  
COMPLETE

## Africa + India

LOCATION:  
DISNEY'S ANIMAL  
KINGDOM VILLAS

■ STATUS:  
COMING  
SOON



Disney's latest addition to their massive offering of worldly cuisines will be **Sanaa, a new restaurant** located at the new Kidani Village at Disney's Animal Kingdom Villas. This table service restaurant is scheduled to open on May 1 with cuisine that blends African and Indian flavors. Look for a complete report in the next issue of *Orlando Attractions Magazine*.

## That's A Wrap!

■ STATUS:  
REFURBISHMENT

LOCATION: MAGIC KINGDOM



Recent visitors to the Magic Kingdom will have found the **Hall of Presidents surrounded by a building wrap** that looks just like the Hall of Presidents. It's all part of keeping the magic alive for Disney's guests as the attraction receives a major refurbishment, adding an audio-animatronic of United States President Barack Obama as well as new speeches for Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. The attraction should reopen in early July.



# Work in Progress?

## Wheel It Happen?

■ STATUS:  
SUSPENDED

LOCATION: NEAR SEAWORLD



Back in Volume 1, Issue 5 (August / September 2008) of *Orlando Attractions Magazine*, we showed you this photo in conjunction with the announcement that Orlando was going to receive a Great Wheel, to be built near SeaWorld. Now, roughly eight months later, the **project has been postponed** until the economy turns around. The Great Orlando Wheel Corp. insists that the project is not canceled but simply suspended until funding returns. So it appears that Disney's Characters in Flight balloon (updated on the previous page) will be, when completed, the best place in Orlando to get a bird's eye view of the whole city.

## Nearly Time To Fly

■ STATUS:  
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

LOCATION: SEAWORLD



The track at SeaWorld's Manta roller coaster is installed and, by the time you read this, the ride vehicles will be soaring around the track in a test phase. The new roller coaster's opening date is set for May 22, though it's possible that soft openings will get park guests onto the flying roller coaster even sooner. The view pictured here is the one that guests will see as soon as they enter SeaWorld, so it will be nearly impossible to miss Manta's presence.

## More Red Track

■ STATUS:  
UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION

LOCATION:  
UNIVERSAL STUDIOS



Work continues on Universal Studios **Hollywood Rip, Ride, Rockit** roller coaster with more bright red track being installed in and around the theme park. When complete, the coaster will take riders high over the park's streets as well as over part of nearby CityWalk. The ride's official web site ([hollywoodripriderockit.com](http://hollywoodripriderockit.com)) features a construction blog, fun facts about the coaster, and even a game to play featuring some of the attraction's promotional artwork.

## Cat and Mouse

■ STATUS:  
IN THE WORKS

LOCATION:  
DISNEY'S BOARDWALK RESORT



Chef Cat Cora, best known to TV watchers from her appearances on Food Network's *Iron Chef America*, will be opening a new restaurant at Disney's BoardWalk Resort called Kouzzina. The restaurant will feature Mediterranean-style cuisine — something very familiar to Cora, who was born to a family of Greek restaurateurs. The new restaurant will be owned and operated by Disney and is scheduled to open by fall 2009. Unfortunately, this news also means the end of Spoodles, a Boardwalk restaurant that will close to make way for Kouzzina. No closing date for Spoodles has been announced yet.



## Harry Not-ter

LOCATION: ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE

■ STATUS:  
STILL BUILDING



In what's starting to feel like the longest construction project ever, Universal's **Wizarding World of Harry Potter** is... wait for it... still under construction. As you can see from this picture, something has slightly changed since our last update two months ago, but not much. With an opening date still a year away, we don't expect major changes any time soon.

## Rarely Twisting

LOCATION: UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

■ STATUS:  
MOSTLY CLOSED

Universal Studios announced they are reducing their number of operating attractions by two with the **closure of Twister... Ride It Out and Fear Factor Live**. Both attractions will remain intact for seasonal openings but you can expect them to possibly be closed if you visit the park. Until Hollywood Rip, Ride, Rockit opens later this year, the closure of these two attractions brings the total number of attractions at Universal Studios down to nine, not including character-based performance shows.



## A New Grind

LOCATION: UNIVERSAL CITYWALK

■ STATUS:  
COMPLETE

CityWalk's newest store, **Element**, recently **opened** in a newly constructed space near NASCAR Sports Grille. The store is a skateboard shop with skater-inspired clothes, accessories and, of course, skateboards. Element is owned by the same company as Quiet Flight Surf Shop, also located at CityWalk. Future plans for the new store include autograph signings with skateboarding stars, though no specifics have been released.



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### CURRENT MATCH-UP

## DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS VS. UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ORLANDO

REMATCH: WHICH PARK OFFERS A MORE REALISTIC & AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE?



**WINNER:** The American Idol Experience plays out exactly like a real television taping.

### ALMOST REAL TV



Fear Factor LIVE doesn't recreate the show, which is probably why Universal Studios has decided to switch it to seasonal operation only.



Streets of America is like a Disney version of New York and San Francisco. Wait, it actually IS a Disney version of New York and San Francisco.

### FAMILIAR STREETS



**WINNER:** Universal's New York streets actually make you feel like you're wandering through the Big Apple.



**TOSS-UP:** The Sci-Fi Dine-In brings guests back to a classic '50s drive-in, complete with cheesy '50s sci-fi movies.

### DREAMY DINING



**TOSS-UP:** Mel's Diner brings guests back to a classic '50s diner, straight out of George Lucas' *American Graffiti*.



Only two Disney rides (Star Tours & The Great Movie Ride) immerse guests into movies, and both could use an update.

### RIDE THE MOVIES



**WINNER:** With attractions like *Jaws*, *Men in Black*, *Terminator 2*, and *ET*, Universal Studios' attractions define the phrase "ride the movies."



ESPN: The Weekend is the only regular live TV taping at Hollywood Studios and it takes place just once a year.

### REALLY REAL TV



**WINNER:** TNA Wrestling, an actual television production, is taped often at Universal Studios' backlot facilities in front of a live audience.





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# Photo Finds

Orlando is always filled with fun things to see and our photographers are there to capture it all.

**Visit our Web site for videos and more photos from many of these events.**



Sports stars converged onto Disney's Hollywood Studios for **ESPN The Weekend** from Feb. 27 to March 1. Baseball great Jim Palmer was just one of many who paraded down Hollywood Boulevard, took part in interviews and gave kids some tips in the Sports Zone. Many ESPN personalities were also on hand to meet fans and film various shows at the park.



**Otronicon**, an annual event showcasing the newest (and oldest) video games, took place Jan. 16 to 20 at the Orlando Science Center. Attendees could try out the games, enter tournaments or just browse the exhibit. There was even a Halo-inspired wedding. Here a visiting Stormtrooper cheers on a tie-fighter pilot playing a Microsoft flight simulator.



Disney's Champion Stadium is the **spring training home to the Atlanta Braves**. Here Donald Duck cheers on the kids throwing out the first pitch on Feb. 12.



**Guiding Light** star **Murray Bartlett** (Cyrus) posed with some of his fans and TV hopefuls during an open casting session March 7 in Universal CityWalk. Several cast members taped scenes throughout the Universal Resort the week of March 16, to be shown over multiple episodes in mid/late April. The cast also participated in autograph signings and were a part of the Mardi Gras parade on March 21.





**Mardi Gras** started on Feb. 7 and continues select nights until April 18 at Universal Studios. The evening festival includes cajun food and bands, a parade, a top name concert on Universal's new permanent stage, and plenty of beads.



**Velvet Session**, a rock 'n' roll cocktail party, is usually held the last Thursday each month at the Hard Rock Hotel at Universal Orlando. 10,000 Maniacs (pictured) performed in January followed by Animation on March 26.



The **Festival of Chocolate** took place on March 7 and 8 at The Florida Hotel at The Florida Mall. There were many booths set up selling all kinds of chocolate, games and crafts for kids, a chocolate museum and cooking demonstrations.



**Dale Earnhardt Jr.** answered questions from fans and unveiled a replica of his No. 88 National Guard/AMP Energy Chevrolet at Universal CityWalk on Feb. 8. The replica is now on display in front of the NASCAR Sports Grill.

The **launch of Space Shuttle Discovery** could be seen from most everywhere in Central Florida on March 15. The sunset launch highlighted the smoke trail left behind. Here's how the launch looked over a lake near Downtown Disney.







# *Idol* Opportunity

Visitors to Disney's Hollywood Studios get into the act in the new American Idol Experience.

**BY JULIE SAUNDERS**  
PHOTOS BY MATT ROSEBOOM





**LEFT:** Yes, that photograph was taken at Walt Disney World, not in a studio in California. *American Idol* television host Ryan Seacrest, along with all seven past *Idol* winners were in attendance at the world premiere event for the American Idol Experience attraction on Feb. 12.

**ABOVE:** In the Disney attraction, the three judges have similar personality traits to Randy, Paula, and Simon from the *American Idol* television show.

**RIGHT:** For the world premiere event, a giant blue carpet was rolled out all the way to the giant Sorcerer's Hat at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

**BELOW:** Hopeful Joel Van Wie performed with four other finalists in the finale show at the world premiere event. Ultimately, Mark Ellis (pictured at left, next to Ryan Seacrest) won the Dream Ticket, giving him the ability to bypass the line at a regional *American Idol* television audition.





**W**ith heart racing and palms sweating, the singer steps center stage. Eyes adjust to bright white spotlights, which follow every move and mask 1,000 faces in the audience. The music begins. Lifting microphone to mouth, the performer begins to sing.

## THIS... ...is The American Idol Experience!

**W**ith the same look and feel as the Hollywood, Calif. television show, this version plays live several times daily at Disney's Hollywood Studios where theme park visitors can perform or watch and vote for daily winners in this new attraction.

Developed in cooperation with 19 TV Ltd and FremantleMedia North America, a subsidiary of FremantleMedia, the UK-based entertainment giant that created and produces the original *Pop Idol* television show and numerous *Idol* spin-offs around the world, The American Idol Experience offers year-round audition opportunities for up to 400 budding stars daily.

"We offer a variety of entertainment like *Star Wars*, *Toy Story* and now *American Idol* in our newest attraction, American Idol Experience, which gives guests the opportunity to perform in or watch realistic television production," said Reed Jones (pictured on opposite page), director, Creative Development

The American Idol Experience stage is nearly like the one currently used for the television show. Ryan Seacrest felt at home at the world premiere event.



for Walt Disney Entertainment. "It took over a year to translate the hit television show into an interactive attraction." The American Idol Experience began trial openings in January and celebrated its grand opening on Feb. 14 to large crowds of enthusiastic park-goers.

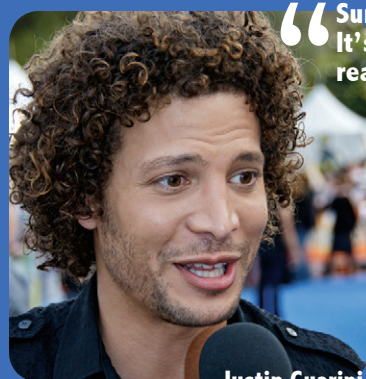
Located in the former ABC Theatre, the blue neon signs and exterior stadium-sized LED display make The American Idol Experience hard to miss. From performing to audience participation – everyone gets into the act. And nearly anyone can audition for a shot at five minutes of fame.

### Idol Auditions

Visitors age 14 years and up wishing to audition head to the artists' entrance, located behind the theater, where they will either be admitted immediately or assigned a return time for their audition. Singers between 14 and 17 years old must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian throughout the

## Idol Chatter

Here's what some *American Idol* celebrities said when asked if they would have auditioned at Walt Disney World, had the attraction already been open.



Justin Guarini

“Sure, why not? It's just like the real thing.”

“I would have come here – it's so real. If it's something you want to do, you have to check this out.”



Bucky Covington



Diana DeGarmo

“If I'd had the opportunity to be seen prior to everyone else, I would have definitely done it.”





**Reed Jones**, director of Creative Development for Walt Disney Entertainment



**A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR:** *Idol* fans will recognize elements taken from the television show, including the “Coke moment” with contestants pictured above. Fans likely won’t be able to leave without spending a few bucks in the attraction’s store (right).



audition and performance process.

Once inside, potential performers enter private audition rooms where a casting director listens to them sing without any musical accompaniment. During auditions, singers should demonstrate the four Ps: pitch, posture, presence and performance. If the casting director likes them, the singer moves on to a second audition with a producer.

Those selected for a second audition go to the “red room” – much like the television show – and use an MP3 player to listen to selections from a list of around 100 songs, choosing three to five songs for their second audition and possible performance. Categories

include: country, disco, Latin, rock/pop, R&B and of course, a few Disney tunes.

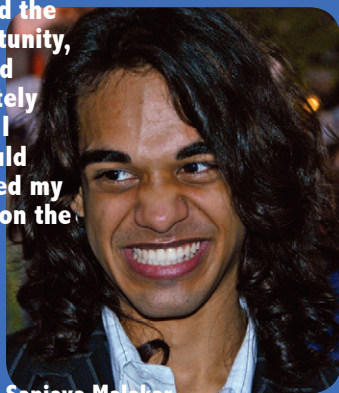
After selecting songs and signing consent forms, contestants advance to their second audition in front of a producer. In addition to judging candidates’ singing ability, producers use a spotlight to test star power and poise. Only a handful of hopefuls will be selected to perform each day and all decisions are final.

### *Idol* Readiness

Three contestants advance to sing in one of several daily shows. Alternates are also selected in case any contestants

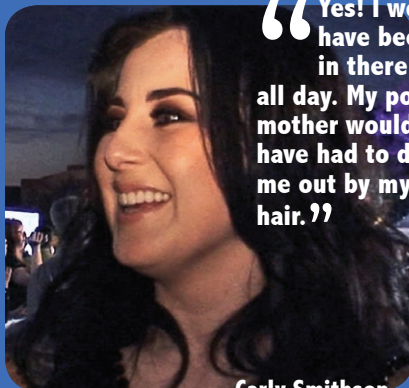
**ONLINE EXTRA:** Visit [www.attractionsmagazine.com](http://www.attractionsmagazine.com) for the complete video interviews.

“If I had the opportunity, I would have definitely come here. I think it would have changed my experience on the show.”



**Sanjaya Malakar**

“Yes! I would have been in there all day. My poor mother would have had to drag me out by my hair.”



**Carly Smithson**

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are unable to perform. Winners from preliminary shows compete in the finale show where an overall daily winner is named.

During rehearsal, producers work with potential stars to select the best song for them and offer feedback on performance and stage presence. Although The American Idol Experience is a singing competition, it is important for contestants to “sell” their performance to help garner the most votes by audience members, so confidence is critical. Performers and alternates also receive hair and make-up star treatment.

“Have a good time because it will show. Pick a song that’s good for your voice and then give it all you’ve got,” advised *American Idol* season three runner-up, Diana DeGarmo. Season one finalist, Justin Guarini, said, “This experience is about having fun, so go in there knowing the audience is on your side.”

### *Idol* Venue

Entering The American Idol Experience is like being transported to a parallel universe. Everything looks and sounds like the popular television show. Blue neon lighting, swirling logos and a huge screen recreate a familiar scene. Measuring 3,000 square feet, the stage is slightly smaller than the one in Hollywood, Calif. due to differences in theater size. Another notable difference is the placement of the judges table, which is on-stage at The American Idol Experience.

The American Idol Experience performers have the added advantage of one of the largest teleprompters anywhere scrolling song lyrics from the back of the theater. There’s no forgetting the lyrics here!

The attraction boasts the latest technology for stage production, including radio frequency identification (RFID) tags clipped to performers’ collars, allowing select spotlights and high-definition broadcast cameras to automatically follow singers’ every move. “In addition to RFID tags, we have two more hand-held video cameras and one Steadicam, allowing the operator freedom of movement, including going up and down stairs, without

creating a bouncy image,” explained Michael Jung, vice president and creative director of Walt Disney Imagineering. “When video operators film guests waiting to enter the attraction, images are uploaded wirelessly to an editor who splices clips together for use during shows.”

In total, the attraction uses 735 lighting fixtures – some of which are LEDs (light emitting diodes), 113 video screens and 105 audio speakers throughout the stage and audition spaces. The use of LED lights saves the equivalent of electricity needed for 60 homes per day. There are also more than 76 miles of cable snaking through 25 miles of conduit.

In addition to cast members with on-stage roles as hosts and judges, there are approximately 30 technical cast members behind the scenes. Jason Dobbins, marketing manager for Walt Disney World Parks and Resorts, cites volume as one of the biggest challenges in developing American Idol Experience.

“*American Idol* produces two television shows each week. We put on seven preliminary shows per day and only have 35 minutes between shows to prepare.”

### *Idol* Performance

Preliminary shows closely follow the television show format, with contestant interviews, previously recorded video of audience members and clever quips from judges. Although the three on-stage judges tend to evoke images of the three original *American Idol* judges, Randy Jackson, Paula Abdul and Simon Cowell, each has a musical background. Each offers comments and advice, along with some one-liners, to each contestant immediately after they perform.

Performers sing one song, giving it their all. Connecting with the audience is vital, since they are the only ones voting for the winner. *American Idol* Season five finalist, Ace Young, offered winning advice, “If you mean it, the audience will feel it, so be sincere and pick a song that you know.”

Also true to the television show, short replays of each performance are shown on a massive curved 35-foot by 7.5-foot LED wall prior to audience voting. “Performers’ clips

### *Idol*-ology

- Visitors age 14 years and up are eligible to audition for The American Idol Experience.
- To be eligible to audition for the *American Idol* television show, performers must be between ages 16 and 28 and U.S. citizens or legal permanent U.S. residents.
- The Dream Ticket provides winners an audition reservation for an *American Idol* television show regional audition. The Dream Ticket does not include travel, meals, lodging or other expenses.
- If any daily American Idol Experience winner is ineligible to audition for the *American Idol* television show, they may transfer their Dream Ticket to an eligible person.
- Performers selected to sing on stage – regardless of whether or not they won a preliminary or finale show – are not eligible to audition again for 30 days.
- The finale show is simulcast live on a huge exterior LED screen, which is a first for any Disney theme park attraction.
- The American Idol Experience sports three hidden Mickeys on-stage.
- Auditions run every 15 minutes between 9 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. daily. For details, frequently asked questions, or to reserve an audition time in advance, visit [disneyworld.com/idol](http://disneyworld.com/idol).



are quickly edited while the audience watches a music video featuring *American Idol* season six winner, Jordin Sparks," said Jung.

### Idol Worship

Winners from preliminary shows compete in a finale show where one lucky performer is voted overall daily winner. As in preliminary shows, judges provide feedback after each performance, but the winner is determined by audience vote using armrest keypads that tabulate votes in less than two seconds. Although there is no cut to commercial, the host does a great job of building anticipation before announcing the winner.

In addition to a confetti shower, winners of the daily finale shows receive Dream Tickets allowing them to skip the long lines at a regional audition for the *American Idol* television show.

Season six finalist, Sanjaya Malakar predicted, "Now that *American Idol* Experience is available, more people will have

the opportunity to gain valuable experience prior to auditioning."

Bringing The American Idol Experience to Walt Disney World offers guests a realistic television experience at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Dobbins explained the logic behind developing this new attraction. "The *American Idol* brand is a huge pop culture phenomenon and maintains its number one rating. Families watch *American Idol* together and we have something for every member of the family at Disney's Hollywood Studios, so *American Idol* Experience is a natural fit."

### ONLINE EXTRAS

Don't miss our hugely popular online videos and photo gallery of The American Idol Experience world premiere events including *Idol* winners Carrie Underwood and David Cook performing separately and together, in a first-ever duet, as well as the largest-ever gathering of *Idol* contestants and winners in one location.

Find it all in high-definition on our web site:  
[www.attractionsmagazine.com](http://www.attractionsmagazine.com)





# Unleash your Inner Celebrity

VIP tours offer a unique way to see Orlando's theme parks.

**BY DEBORAH BRAUSER**



**MAGICAL TOUR:** One of Disney's tour guides escorts four young guests on a Premium VIP Tour.

**W**hen it comes to the area's theme parks, there are all types of fans. Some have visited only a few times, while others come at least once or more every year. And then there are those who want the ultimate in ease and prestige – the VIP tour. All of the major theme parks in the area offer a variety of choices for small group tours, and almost all can add some form of customization.

From celebrating a birthday, to providing a fun activity for a family reunion, to just wanting to see as much as possible in the shortest amount of time, VIP tour guests enjoy special access to shows, fewer waits in line and personable guides who are experts at giving the best park experience. And no matter which tour they choose, guests agree that it's definitely worth it.

## Walt Disney World

Walt Disney World's personalized, guided VIP tours have a minimum of six continuous hours and can host up to 10 people. (If there are more in your party, you'll need to pay for additional guides.)

Their standard VIP tour, which has a specific start time, provides special seating for parades, live stage shows, and fireworks in one park. In addition, the guides will take into account which rides and attractions the group most

wants to see, the age of each group member, any requirements needed (such as a wheelchair) and special requests.

"Our tour guides are very knowledgeable," said Michelle Homer, operations manager for Disney Special

Activities, which handles VIP tours in the park. "We like to say that they help maximize your time and minimize your wait."

She said that with all that Disney has to offer, guests can sometimes get overwhelmed. "The tour guides can help guests navigate the parks and give them tips on what's best. The guests don't have to even look at a park map – which is a good thing!"

At an additional daily charge, private transportation can be added. Or you can upgrade to the Premium VIP Tour. With this option, your guide will meet you at your resort in a private vehicle and then drive your group to the park of your choice. This option provides a flexible start time and allows for multiple park visits within the scheduled time period.

None of the tours offer front-of-the-line access. "Our guests find out the tour guides truly know the right times to hit attractions on a particular day and they can lead them through pretty quickly," explained Homer. The guides also make use of the parks' FastPass system.

Surprisingly, the majority of participants are repeat visitors, with some purchasing a VIP tour as often as three times a year. "After experiencing this service, I think it's hard for them to go back to being a regular guest," said Homer with a laugh. She also thinks the tour guides are a big draw for bringing people back.



## STARS IN THE PARKS

While the theme parks would not specifically discuss VIP arrangements when celebrities visit, they do often use the opportunity to release images of the stars visiting the parks.

**Former President Jimmy Carter** and his wife Rosalynn were at Universal Studios in January where they met The Simpsons outside of the Kwik-E-Mart. Also with the Carters was their daughter Amy and their grandson Hugo Wentzel.

**Actor Dylan McDermott** (*The Practice*, *In the Line of Fire*) visited the Grinch at Universal's Islands of Adventure with daughters Collette (12) and Charlotte (3). McDermott was vacationing in Orlando during Thanksgiving weekend in 2008.



"We've actually had guests change their vacation dates to make sure they get the same guide. The feedback we receive is that it's all about the service and the tour guide's expertise and wonderful personality. And each one caters to the specific needs of every participant. They just try very hard to wow guests."

Homer suggests that guests who are interested in a future tour should book early, with requests now being taken up to 90 days in advance. And although Disney has almost 160 guides, a recent busy event weekend saw 50 tours given in one day. The average is about 15 a day.

Note: There are no behind the scenes activities given with the VIP tours. Other types of tours, including structured backstage tours, are listed on Disney's Web site.

### Universal Orlando

The Universal Orlando Resort's VIP tour program also offers personally es-

corted tours around their parks. Here, guests can learn about some of the signature attractions and receive priority entry. In addition, they receive complimentary valet parking, the opportunity for private character meet-and-greets (such as with the Grinch during the holidays), and discounted food and merchandise.

There are two VIP tour options. Non-exclusive VIP Tour guests join other parties on a structured, guided walking tour through one or both of the parks. With Exclusive VIP Tours, the guests are the only ones on the tour and are able to customize their day however they wish. Both tours try to limit groups to 12 guests and last from five to eight hours.

"The tours let guests spend time with a friendly theme park expert and get all sorts of behind-the-scenes information," said Alyson Lundell, public relations manager at Universal Orlando Resort. "And it's a great way to see our parks

in a shorter amount of time because you get front-line access to every single ride. Basically, you're being treated like you're sort of a celebrity yourself, getting backdoored into all these great attractions."

Again, the VIP tour program sees a lot of repeat visitors, with many requesting the same tour guide. In addition to offering advice and answering questions about all things Universal, guides will often join guests on the rides – or even stay behind and hold bags and purses. "Kids especially often want their guide to ride with them," said Lundell. "So we like to make sure that can happen."

A wide variety of groups have taken advantage of these tours, including those celebrating birthdays, meeting attendees and even friends just getting together and wanting to do something different. "They just seem to appeal to everyone," said Lundell. "If guests are considering one of our tours, I'd suggest calling us first to discuss specifics and ways you'd like to customize your experience, especially for young children. And though I'll say call as soon as you can, if you're already in town, go ahead and give us a ring and we'll try our best to accommodate you."

Trudy Whinnett from Brisbane, Queensland, Aus-





**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS:** A VIP tour at SeaWorld Orlando allows for up-close and personal visits with dolphins and penguins.



tralia took the VIP tours at both Universal parks with her husband and two of her teenaged sons. "During our tour at Islands of Adventure, our guide was very informative and got enough details out of us so that he could mold the tour to suit our interests. We appreciated it as it meant that we weren't spending time at attractions that we weren't interested in. We saw all of the park and some behind-the-scenes stuff on how each area was created. During our Universal Studios tour, our guide had some great stories to share about the park and attractions and even some of the stars involved in the movies that the attractions were based on."

Jean Broughton from Charleston, W. Va., enjoyed the one-day/two-park tour. "Our favorite part was being placed on each ride with no wait. The guide was very funny and upbeat during the long tour, telling stories about each ride. And it was great to easily navigate the

park at Easter, a very busy time of year."

### SeaWorld Orlando

SeaWorld Orlando offers two structured tours. The VIP Tour guides guests through the park's shows and rides, with front-of-line access. In addition, guests can feed dolphins, stingrays and sea lions. Lunch is provided poolside during the Dine with Shamu program.

The Elite VIP Tour is for private groups of two to 12 people. In addition to the activities offered in the standard tour, The Elite also includes a penguin encounter and lunch at the Sharks Underwater Grill.

Other types of tours, focusing more on their animals, can be found on SeaWorld's Web site.

### Busch Gardens Tampa

Busch Gardens also offers two VIP tours. The five-hour group Guided Adventure Tour provides front-of-line access to major

rides, reserved show seating, special attention during their Serengeti Safari and lunch. The Elite Adventure Tour offers the same activities, but on an eight-hour private

tour.

Broughton has taken VIP tours at SeaWorld and Busch Gardens, as well as Universal. "These tours were all worth the money as I partici-

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pated at really busy times. Of the three, I enjoyed Universal's tour guide the best, but appreciate that the other two parks included lunch. Overall, they were all great."

If you decide this is the way you want to experience your favorite park, be sure to call as soon as you can and talk with the customer service representative about special requests. After all, while being treated like royalty, you should get the adventure of your dreams.



**VIP ADVENTURE:** Busch Gardens offers Adventure Tours providing unique access to rides, shows, and animal encounters.

## Costs and Contacts

Embarking on a VIP tour of Central Florida's finest theme parks certainly sounds like a wonderful way to make an exciting vacation even more special, but it doesn't come cheap. All VIP tours are in addition to regular theme park admission.

### Walt Disney World

Contact 407-560-4033

#### VIP Tour

For those staying on Disney property: \$175/hour for the entire group, up to 10 people. Or \$195/hour during holiday periods.

For those staying off site: \$195/hour or \$215/hour during holidays.

A minimum of six hours is required for either.

Private transportation: \$120 per day, plus the price of the VIP tour chosen.

#### Premium VIP Tour

Ranges from \$275 to \$315/hour, and includes the private transportation fee. (With a minimum of 6 hours required.)

### SeaWorld

Contact 1-800-406-2244

#### VIP Tour

Changes seasonally, but averages around \$125 per adult, \$100 per child.

#### Elite VIP Tour Costs

Changes seasonally, but averages around \$250 per person for any age.

### Universal Studios

Contact 407-363-8295

#### 1-Day/1-Park Non-Exclusive Tour

\$120 per person plus tax. Lasts approximately five hours.

#### 1-Day/2-Park Non-Exclusive Tour

\$150 per person plus tax. Lasts approximately seven hours.

#### 1-Day/1-Park Exclusive VIP Tour

\$1,600 plus tax per group. Tour lasts up to eight hours.

#### 1-Day/2-Park Exclusive VIP Tour

\$2,000 plus tax per group. Tour lasts up to eight hours.

#### 2-Day/2-Park Exclusive VIP Tour

\$3,000 plus tax per group. Tour lasts up to eight hours each day.

### Busch Gardens

Contact 1-888-800-5447

#### Guided Adventure Tour

\$94.99 per adult, \$84.99 per child. Group tour, lasts five hours.

#### Elite Adventure Tour

\$199.99 per person for an eight-hour private tour.



**PLAIDS:** Disney's VIP tour guides are instantly recognizable anywhere in the parks due to their unique costumes. Over the years, these guides have become known unofficially as "plaids," for obvious reasons.



# It's Time to Light the Lights on Jim Henson's Life & Legacy

The Smithsonian brings  
Jim Henson's Fantastic World  
to Orlando.

**BY RICKY BRIGANTE**  
PHOTOS BY MATT ROSEBOOM



**MAHNA MAHNA:** Jim Henson's Fantastic World showcases original puppets from *The Muppet Show*, *Sesame Street*, *Fraggle Rock* and other Henson productions.

**B**ert, Ernie, Kermit, Rowlf – Unusual names that are immediately associated with an unusually large number of wonderful memories for children and adults alike. They're creations of a man named Jim Henson, whose legacy has lived on in many forms long after his untimely death on May 16, 1990.

Exactly one year after his passing, on May 16, 1991, Henson's final directing project, *MuppetVision 3D*, opened at the Disney-MGM Studios theme park (now Disney's Hollywood Studios). This attraction acts as a long-standing tribute to Henson's creativity, featuring his Muppets in a 3D movie, in audio-animatronic form, as well as The Jim Henson Company's first digital

puppet, Waldo. But the attraction lacks a personal connection to Jim Henson, the man.

Orlando visitors can now experience that connection at Jim Henson's Fantastic World, a traveling Smithsonian exhibition that has landed at the Orange County Regional History Center until May 3. The exhibit explores Henson's entire career, beginning with his earliest sketches. In fact, the exhibit features more than 100 pieces of artwork, photographs and documents, chronologically arranged to give visitors a glimpse at the complete scope of projects Henson worked on.

This is the exhibit's sixth stop on its nationwide tour and Heather Henson, Jim's daughter and Orlando resident, was eager for it to arrive. "I think it's very





exciting to have this piece of my father come down in close proximity to where the Muppets are at Disney World,” said Heather. “You get a little piece of Jim Henson – the man, the artist, the mind, the whole scope of what his mind does – when you have this exhibit.”

Jim Henson is best known for his creation of the television shows *Sesame Street*, *Fraggle Rock* and *The Muppet Show*, and these elements are well-represented in the exhibit. Several original puppets are showcased for visitors to see up-close in what nearly amounts to meeting a celebrity. Anna Cohn, director of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, said, “I think there’s an intimacy here that no larger display environment possibly can present. That is very special. That really enables a one-on-one relationship to the characters, so given how endearing these characters are, I think that would be a draw for people wanting to experience their best friends in a different setting.”

With the History Center located in downtown Orlando, just 30 minutes from Walt Disney World, any guest who enjoys MuppetVision 3D now has a chance to know more about the creation of those lovable Muppets. Heather Henson said it’s worth the extra trip. “I think people should come down here to Orlando and spend a day here at the History Center and then go down to [Disney’s Hollywood Studios] see MuppetVision 3D.

“When you go to the theme park,



**MUPPET MUSICIAN:** Exhibit curator Karen Falk points out that Rowlf requires the control of two puppeteers – one for his mouth and left hand and another for his right hand.

you’re going to see the final result – the final puppets that are famous and that are known – but if you want to see that insight of where it came from, I think this [exhibit] is where you can see that.”

The exhibit’s curator, Karen Falk, believes a visit to Jim Henson’s Fantastic World offers more than just a history lesson. “Part of what we were trying to do in this exhibit is to give you an idea how very personally you can get involved with these kinds of artists and you can be inspired to create [something] yourself. I think if you see this exhibit and then you see the theme parks, you can make the connection and you could perhaps be inspired to say, ‘Well I could maybe make something that could end up in a theme park.’”

It’s no wonder that this exhibit set an attendance record in its stop at the



Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., bringing more than 360,000 visitors in its short seven-week stay. Likewise, the exhibit has broken the Orange County Regional History Center’s previous attendance records and has been quite well-received.

Sherry Meadows Lewis, director of marketing and public relations for the History Center said, “We have received universally positive feedback from guests and surveys, as well as from Smithsonian and Jim Henson Legacy representatives and from some of the people who were part of creating these



**DOWN IN FRAGGLE ROCK:** Heather Henson, standing next to *Fraggle Rock* puppets Gobo and Cantus, explains how the exhibit enhances visitors’ enjoyment of her father’s work.



## MOVING ON

If you're unable to make it to the Orange County Regional History Center to enjoy Jim Henson's *Fantastic World* before its final day on May 3, you may be able to catch it in one of its currently scheduled six future stops:

**May 23 to Aug. 16, 2009**

Experience Music Project  
Science Fiction Museum, Seattle, WA

**Sept. 5 to Nov. 29, 2009**

James A. Michener Art Museum  
Doylestown, PA

**Dec. 19, 2009 to March 14, 2010**

Mississippi Museum of Art  
Jackson, MS

**April 3, 2010 to June 27, 2010**

National Heritage Museum  
Lexington, MA

**July 17, 2010 to Oct. 10, 2010**

Fresno Metropolitan Museum,  
Fresno, CA

**Oct. 30, 2010 to Jan. 23, 2011**

Museum of Science and Industry  
Chicago, IL

In addition, visitors to the Orange County Regional History Center will be able to enjoy a new exhibit called "Out of This World: Extraordinary Costumes from Film and Television" beginning in February 2010.

## ONLINE EXTRAS

Visit us online for a 14-minute guided tour of Jim Henson's *Fantastic World* at the Orange County Regional History Center given by curator Karen Falk and featuring Heather Henson, Jim's wife, Jane Henson, and others.

Also online is a photo gallery filled with even more images from the exhibit.

[www.attractionsmagazine.com](http://www.attractionsmagazine.com)



### THE BEGINNING:

The exhibit walks visitors through Jim Henson's career, beginning with walls lined with some of his earliest sketches. Also on display are Featherstone and King Goshposh, who first appeared in a 1962 television pilot called *Tales of the Tinkerdee*.

worlds with Henson who came just to see the exhibition, like Bonnie Erickson (creator of Miss Piggy), Michael Frith (former executive vice president and creative director for Jim Henson Productions), Kathy Mullen (Muppet puppeteer), and more."

Many visitors to the History Center have also found the rest of the exhibits showcased there make the trip to downtown Orlando even more worthwhile. "We are very pleased that visitors, especially with so many first-time visitors, are taking time to visit all the permanent exhibits and expressing surprise and delight at their history museum," said Lewis. Other Henson-related exhibits at the History Center through May 10 include Creative Minds: Puppetry in Central Florida, The Dark Crystal Redux: "Klakk smaithh Skwee Kreh", and the Jim Henson Imagination Station. In addition, the History Center always features a four-floor tour through Florida's history. Their newest exhibit, called Destination Florida: Tourism Before Disney, explores what Florida was like before Walt Disney World was built.

While all of these exhibits are full of unique items to view, none surpass the excitement of seeing the Muppets, Fraggles, and original sketches and artwork that are showcased in Jim Henson's *Fantastic World*.

Arthur Novell, executive director of the nonprofit Jim Henson Legacy, best summed up the exhibit's widespread appeal. "The test of time – it's a cliché but it's true. Jim started in 1954/55 and here we are in 2009 and we're talking about Jim Henson and his creations and his vision and it's really extraordinary. He is truly an American icon."



**HISTORY THROUGHOUT:** The Orange County Regional History Center is located in what was the Orange County Courthouse, originally built in 1927.



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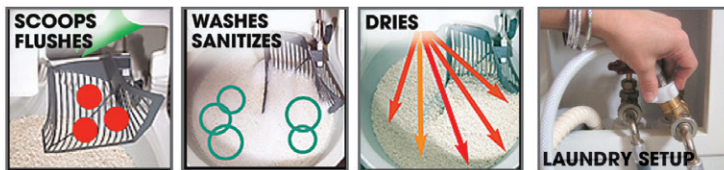
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# The Holy Land Experience Brings the Bible To Life

Religious theme park offers something for all.

BY JULIE SAUNDERS PHOTOS BY MATT ROSEBOOM

**A**mid beautiful architecture and lush landscapes, a cruel and bloody pageant takes place. Audience members watch silently, some weeping at the sight of Jesus Christ being whipped by Roman soldiers in a Passion drama, *Behold The Lamb*, performed daily at the Holy Land Experience.

The 30-minute drama begins with Jesus' betrayal and arrest in the garden. Pontius Pilate washes his hands of the trumped up charges and allows the assembled mob to decide Jesus' fate. Cries of "crucify him" ring out and Jesus, portrayed by Canadian-born actor, Les Cheveldayoff, is stripped of his cloak and whipped by soldiers.

Uncomfortably realistic, lashes produce streaks of "blood" on Jesus' bare skin as he writhes in agony with each blow. They mockingly place a crown of thorns on his head and strap him to a crossbeam while the crowd jeers and soldiers snarl, "We have no God but Caesar."

Sickening sound effects ring out as Jesus' hands and feet are "nailed" to a cross amid more flogging. The cross is raised (pictured opposite, bottom-right) and Jesus pleads to God, committing himself before slumping dead.

*Behold The Lamb* is one of several dramas, historical presentations and exhibits showcased at Holy Land Experience, described as a

Christian theme park. Originally opened in 2001

by Rev. Marvin Rosenthal, a Messianic Jew (believes Jesus is the Messiah) from New Jersey, the complex was sold to Trinity Broadcast Network (TBN) in June 2007. TBN, the largest religious broadcaster, views the acquisition as a joining of recreation and production facilities.

"This marriage will bring

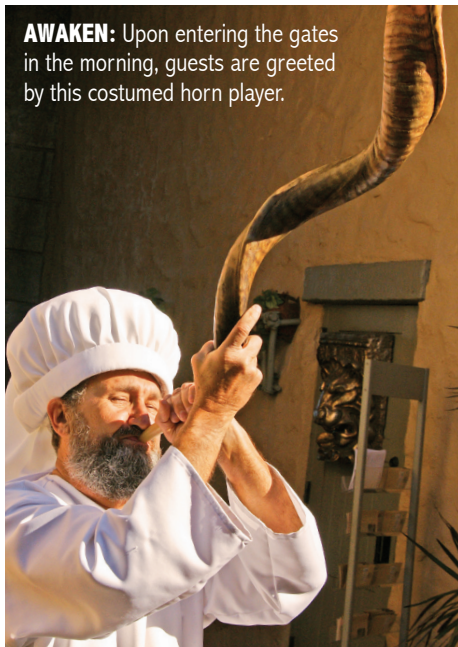
unprecedented synergy to both ministries and productions done there will be seen by a worldwide audience," said Paul Crouch, Jr., TBN vice president of Administration. "TBN's involvement made sense, because both ministries are about changing and affecting people's lives."



**HOLY HISTORY:** The Scriptorium: Center for Biblical Antiquities tells the story of how the Bible came to be and features a large collection of religious artifacts and manuscripts.



**AWAKEN:** Upon entering the gates in the morning, guests are greeted by this costumed horn player.



## Pilgrimage

With current turmoil in Israel, travel to Jerusalem, especially the Old City of Jerusalem, is discouraged by the United States Department of State. However, a visit to the Holy Land Experience is safe and convenient. If desiring a pilgrimage abroad, consider Orlando instead of Israel – for now anyway.

Visitors to the Holy Land Experience range from church and school groups to retirees. The Holy Land Experience is a quiet, reverent place with lovely prayer gardens scattered about for personal reflection. Donation and prayer request boxes appear in several locations for guests offerings.

Jane Wilcox, supervisor of Prayer Partners, guest services and special projects explained, “Our Prayer Partners collect prayer and salvation requests submitted by visitors and pray over them daily.”

## Touched by Jesus

The main actor portraying Jesus at the Holy Land Experience, Les Cheveldayoff, enjoys his role, “It’s really cool to play Jesus – especially seeing the light turn on in people.” Calling the Holy Land Experience the “Living side of TBN,” Cheveldayoff refers to personal

religious discovery as, “Finding your spiritual fingerprint.”

In addition to acting, Cheveldayoff, a modern-day Renaissance man, is a deacon in the Baptist church and is completing a masters in religious music. He is also an airplane pilot, auto mechanic, woodworker, plays drums and guitar and sings in a gospel quartet, All for His Glory.

Although the Passion, *Behold The Lamb* is his larger and more dramatic role, Cheveldayoff sometimes favors playing Jesus in the more intimate The Ministry of Jesus. “I get to move through and interact with the audience in Ministry of Jesus. Today we had a school group and the kids were really into it – their eyes lit up.” Cheveldayoff said each performance impacts him, calling the Passion “A powerful story,” and said playing Jesus “changed my life for the better.”

The DeYongs of West Chester, Ohio, called the Passion, “Very realistic! We’ve seen several Passions—including the one performed every 10 years in Oberammergau, Germany – and this one was excellent.”

## Crowning Jewel

Not to be missed is the Scriptorium: Center for Biblical Antiquities walk-through exhibit housing upwards of 70 translations of the Bible, manuscripts and religious artifacts. Latin for “writing room,” a scriptorium was a room located in a medieval monastery, where the Scriptures and other religious books were copied by hand.

The artifacts on display, ranging from 2200 BC to the 21st

**PLAYING JESUS:** Les Cheveldayoff has portrayed Jesus since Holy Land Experience first opened.





## Ticket Information

### Current gate prices for one-day tickets are:

Adults \$35, Seniors (55+) \$30, Children (6 to 12) \$20. Children age 5 and under are free. You may purchase tickets online for a \$5 savings. Annual memberships available. Free admission with proof of birthday.

### In addition to regular exhibits and shows, special presentations and live filming of TBN shows occasionally take place.

Free programs include Sunday church service at 10:30 a.m. and Open Bible Thursday nights from 7:30 until 9 p.m. inside Shofar Auditorium.

**Hours vary with seasons. For details, visit [holylandexperience.com](http://holylandexperience.com) or call 800-447-7235.**

## Easter Events

**Jesus the Messiah** — Dramatic look into the life of Christ and His mission.

**Wedding at Cana** — Energizing dancing and original music combine in a beautiful picture of marriage that marks the beginning of Christ's ministry.

**Last Adam** — Powerful story of man's fall to sin and God's plan for redemption. Featuring all original songs and the largest cast ever assembled on the Holy Land stage. Free of charge after park hours.

## ONLINE EXTRAS

Many of the events depicted in the Passion, Behold the Lamb show are too graphic to print images of. Visit our web site for a full photo gallery.

[www.attractionsmagazine.com](http://www.attractionsmagazine.com)



### O LITTLE TOWN, LITERALLY:

Holy Land Experience features a miniature version of Jerusalem, though the overall size of the model is definitely not small with dimensions of 45 by 25 feet.

century, are part of the Van Kampen Collection, founded in 1986 by Robert and Judith Van Kampen of Van Haven, Mich.

The 55-minute automated tour begins with tablets from Babylon (2200-500 BC) and concludes in a rotunda with audio and portraits of the Apostles and Mary. The tour includes scrolls from the Library of Alexandria (500 BC to AD 1200), Byzantine Bindery (AD 100 to 1100), Medieval translations (AD 500 to 1455), Wyclif Bibles from the 15th century and 16th century vernacular (local language) Bibles. Modern era editions are displayed in the Special Exhibit room adjacent to Ex Libris gift shop.

## Adventure and Exhibits

The Smile of a Child Adventure Land includes interactive Bible stories for youngsters to explore. Children will enjoy investigating a giant whale with Jonah in its belly, a theater and cross section of Noah's Ark, a climbing wall and movies. There is also a craft station and presentation of David and Goliath.

Other attractions include: Wilderness Tabernacle presentation of Israel's ancient priesthood — including the Ark of the Covenant, Dead Sea Qumran Caves, Jerusalem Street Market with its narrow alleys, Tiny Town of Bethlehem — a 300- to 400-year-old Italian nativity scene and presentations of a room-size model of Jerusalem.

First-time visitors from Montague, N.J., the Henns said, "It's so beautiful. We're enjoying just walking around and looking at everything."

The gleaming white and gold Temple Plaza hosts live musicals, choirs and other events. Escape the heat inside the Theater of Life which shows TBN family movies.

Oasis Palms Café and several food vendors offer a variety of lunch and snack items. Visitors can even participate in a Last Supper communion.

The combination of production facilities and Holy Land Experience offers Orlando visitors a unique religious experience. Although not in direct competition with other Orlando offerings, Crouch has his sights set on the future. "I am planning on having more people coming through the turnstiles this summer. We want the Holy Land Experience to be a faith-based version of Universal Studios."



**RELIGIOUS ROBOTICS:** While Holy Land Experience does not have any rides, it does feature an audio-animatronic of Bible translator John Wycliffe in the Scriptorium.



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# RESORT REPORT

Just Another  
Day in  
Paradise  
at the

## ROYAL PACIFIC RESORT

WRITTEN BY  
DEBORAH BRAUSER

**A**s guests walk over an entry bridge into an expansive open lobby with stunning views of an orchid garden courtyard, smiling employees and even free lemonade, it's easy to see that the Royal Pacific Resort is all about pampering – and offering a luxurious, tropical experience.

Though located within close proximity to the Universal Orlando theme parks, it's almost like stepping into another world. Upscale South Seas and Polynesian décor, lush greenery, dark carved wood panels and exotic statuary combine to make you believe you've also landed in another era.

According to Jennifer Hodges, director of public relations for Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando, the resort's



PHOTO BY WATT ROSEBOOM

**POOL LUXURY:** The lagoon-style pool includes plenty of room to move around, spouting water features, and even TV-equipped poolside cabanas.



setting is somewhere in the South Pacific during the 1930s. "We felt that was a time when travelers expected great service and a wonderful once-in-a-lifetime experience. So we've themed everything around that, with piped-in music that's sometimes tropical and sometimes from that time period, and really rich details that look like they came from someone's exotic journeys."

## The Spirit of Aloha

"There are so many choices that anyone can make when they come to Orlando," said David Bartek, the resort's general manager. "With our property, from the moment you step inside, it truly becomes a special place to visit." However, he said that an overall commitment to good service is just as important. "It's what I call 'the spirit of Aloha.' And that's what separates us. Sitting next to two of the best theme parks in the country certainly helps, but beyond that, the property is special



Part of the resort's fun theme includes the legend of the mythical Jake McNally. The story goes that he was a pilot for Royal Pacific Airways during the 1930s, and the plane in the lagoon is his. After receiving a letter from his fiancée breaking off their engagement, he disappeared. So his friends opened Jake's American Restaurant as a way to celebrate his storied life. Supposedly, it

houses many of his personal belongings, including items from his days as a successful football player, souvenirs from his many travels and mementos from some of his adventures hunting alligators and even wrestling a large anaconda.

"It's just a fun story," said Jennifer Hodges. "And we're always looking to see if Jake has come back so we can start celebrating his return."

because of the staff that makes it so."

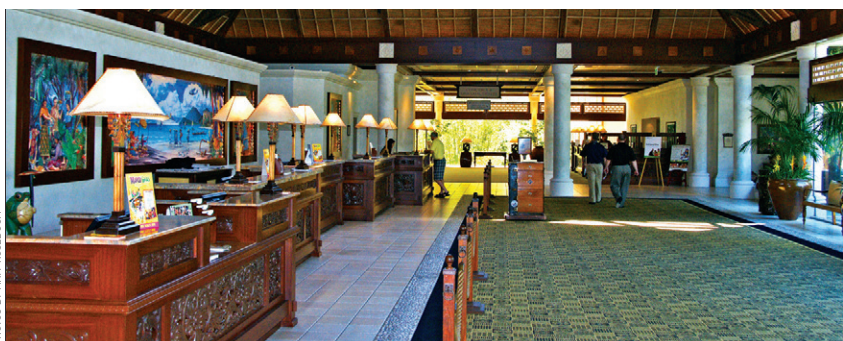
Megan Watson of Washington D.C., said that staying here was worth every penny to her. "The customer service at this resort is incredible," she said. "They treat every customer like they're royalty. I also love the tropical theme - everything had thought put into it. Overall, my favorite part was just the feel you get being there. It was so luxurious."

Jack Ryan of Grafton, Mass., agreed. "The location of the hotel with regards to the park was great and we had no issues with noise whatsoever." He also liked the resort's tropical theme. "It really reminded me of Hawaii."

Open since 2002, the resort has 1,000 rooms on its 53-acre site, which is situated next to Universal's two theme parks and the CityWalk entertainment district. Last spring, it was green-certified by the Florida Green Lodging program (along with Loews' other two Universal hotels).

Scattered throughout the property are hand-carved wooden pieces, stone statues and stone lanterns - all of which were created by artists and craftsmen in Bali and other Indonesian villages. These pieces include sculpture fountains in the beautiful glass-enclosed courtyard, and even a lounging woman beside the boat dock.

A unique nightly event for the resort is its special torch-lighting ceremony, following the



**TROPICAL CHECK-IN:** The Royal Pacific Resort's lobby (and entry bridge) immerse guests into a Polynesian world as soon as they arrive.

PHOTOS BY MATT ROSEBOOM



blowing of a very loud conch shell. Next to the Wantilan Luau Pavilion and firepit, guests can enjoy the "Oli Aloha" welcoming chant and fire dancer. "We just want the hotel to be entertaining and fun, as well as relaxing," said Hodges.

## Rooms with Views... and Dinosaurs

All resort rooms and suites continue the tropical theme, with palm-frond ceiling fans and lamps, and framed posters of South Seas destinations. They also have large flat panel TVs, and views of lush vegetation, the pool area, and/or the park's rides.

In the suites, a separate parlor room holds an antique-looking writing desk, oversized chairs, a sofa bed and another flat panel TV.

For children, the resort offers kids' suites, including the coolest rooms in the whole place – eight brand new Jurassic Park suites. Here, the parents' bedroom side is normal, but a big "Caution!" sign on the second bedroom's door hints at excitement on the other side. These dinosaur-themed rooms feature colorful, custom wall murals, two twin beds with headboards reminiscent of 'raptor cages, industrial-looking furniture to reflect those found in the Jurassic Park movies, and framed photos showing behind-the-scenes movie moments. They also have their own flat panel TV and DVD player.

## The Royal Bali Sea – There She Blows!

Once kids can tear themselves away from their amazing dino-rooms, or need a break from the theme parks, a large lagoon-style pool area awaits. This includes a 320,000 gallon zero-entry, heated pool and the Royal Bali Sea, a giant steamship water feature. It provides water curtains, water cannons, and a top that erupts every few moments, spewing very cold water.

Private cabanas and even "kidbanas" can be rented poolside and offer food and beverage service, and even TVs. In addition, kid-

friendly dive-in movies are shown next to the pool for all guests seasonally.

A sandy beach stretches along the lagoon for lounging and volleyball. The lagoon is also home to a full-sized replica of an island jumper plane, and is the place to catch water taxis, the most relaxing way to get to the parks or to CityWalk. Or, due to its close proximity, guests can easily walk over.

## Restaurants

The most upscale of Royal Pacific's dining options is Emeril's Tchoup Chop (featured in the April/May 2008 issue of *Orlando Attractions Magazine*), which offers Asian cuisine mixed with master chef Emeril Lagasse's famous flavors. This beautiful restaurant features an infinity pool and water wall, an open window to its kitchen, a bar and outdoor dining.

For a more casual, yet lively option, try Jake's American Bar, which provides karaoke, live jazz, and other nightly entertainment. And don't miss Jake's Porch, a quiet area under the entry bridge and next to a waterfall. Secluded amongst lush vegetation, it feels like something straight out of Jurassic Park (before the dinosaurs started running amuck, of course!)

Although Island's Dining Room offers something for everyone, its private dining area is all about the kids. A tiki hut lounging area sits right in the middle of the room, with a mattress, pillows and even a television. It's surrounded by brightly colored jungle murals, interactive video games, and toys galore. Both kids and parents can eat here, as tables surround the play areas. An evening children's buffet is offered, with character dining available on select nights.

For a truly special occasion, don't miss the Wantilan Luau, featuring Polynesian food and entertainment on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Additional Friday shows are held from Memorial weekend through Labor Day.

Parking tickets (which are normally \$15 per day, or \$22 per day for valet services) can be validated for up to two hours for anyone driving

### Did You Know...

**Here are some fun facts you probably didn't know about the Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Studios.**



- The 16 acres of landscaping throughout the property feature 58,000 shrubs and 2,500 trees.
- They have 140 palm trees with dramatically curved trunks, shaped as a result of Florida's Hurricane Andrew. Universal Orlando horticulturists rescued them from various locations and re-planted them on-site, where they now flourish.
- There are 1,552 different wood panels and 80 custom-made stone statues throughout the hotel. All were hand-made and imported from Indonesia.





PHOTO BY MATT ROSEBOM

#### TAXI, PLEASE:

Aside from relaxing beaches, the resort's lagoon offers water taxis that take guests to nearby CityWalk.

onto the property to eat at one of the restaurants.

### Other Amenities

Other services include the Gymnasium, a 5,000-square-foot fitness center recently updated with flat panel TVs and upgraded equipment. It also

features a whirlpool, steam room and sauna.

The Mariner's Club is the resort's kids' program for those aged 4 to 14. For a small fee, kids can enjoy arts and crafts, computers, a ping-pong table, foomball and even indoor basketball.

The hotel is also part of the "Loews

Loves Pets" program. This includes a goody bag for each four-legged guest upon check-in (with a pet tag, bowl and treat), a special pet-oriented service menu and local dog walking routes. A kennel located inside the Universal parking garage is available to guests spending the day in the parks.



**GENTLE OR JURASSIC:** Adults have comfortable accommodations in all resort rooms while kids have the option of sleeping with dinosaurs in a Jurassic Park suite. Adults who are big kids at heart will have a tough time deciding which style of room to sleep in. Fortunately, the suites feature both.

### Skip the Lines

One of the biggest benefits offered here is complimentary Universal Express Ride Access. With paid park admission, guests can use their room key to bypass most rides' regular lines. "Everyone's working harder than ever," said Hodges. "They deserve a vacation and to do the parks in record time and then come back here to relax."

Bartek agreed, "Our overall theme is visiting the south pacific islands during the golden age of travel. We want to be elegant. We want to be luxurious. But yet we also want to be casual, and for guests to have a sense of relaxation and that they can just sit back and be themselves. That and our dedication to customer service are what keeps bringing them back."



# Restaurant Report

## Get the BLUES at BB King's BLUES CLUB

Pointe Orlando restaurant  
attracts music and food  
lovers alike.

**WRITTEN BY  
DEBORAH BRAUSER**



**HAPPIEST BLUES ON EARTH:** Families won't leave BB King's with a case of the blues, but they might go home humming a few bluesy tunes on a full stomach.



Even though BB King's Blues Club Orlando has only been in business for a little over a year, it gives the appearance of an old, nicely worn roadhouse – one that has seen its share of drop-in jam sessions by legendary blues greats.

From the bright neon sign and large folk art portraits of various musical icons lining the exterior walls, to the down-home bluesy guitar licks wafting out, it greets visitors to a night of fun, food and live music.

Inside, more paintings from eclectic Memphis artist Lamar Sorrento adorn the dark walls and even the tabletops, many of which are positioned close to the large stage and dance floor. This overall laid-back feel has been popular with guests from all over the world, including LL Cool J, several Orlando Magic players, and even comedian Bill Engvall – who once dropped in unexpectedly and ended up playing guitar on stage.

On a recent Friday night, the club was full of all ages having a good time: a family of four (plus grandma) enjoying a meal of ribs and fried pickle chips; a group of businessmen relaxing at the bar; a bachelorette party opening gifts in a private lounge area; and several groups of onlookers clapping along the upstairs railing as the BB King All Star Band rocked out on the large main level stage.

"It was designed to be welcoming to everyone," said General Manager Terry Kalb. "So kids are welcome with their parents and we do have a kids menu. When they come in, they have fun and get a little education on this wonderful music. So if we can spark excitement in them for this, I think that's awesome."





EXTERIOR & SINGER PHOTOS BY MATT ROSEBOM



#### DAILY ENTERTAINMENT:

There's no shortage of great music at BB King's, including guitars, horns, and singers.

### Opening Day with BB

The club officially opened Dec. 3, 2007 and celebrated in style with four nights of performances by BB King himself (pictured below). "We were so lucky to get him all those days," said Kalb. "And the place was completely packed, of course. BB said he was impressed with the club and thought it was beautiful. He also said he's looking forward to coming back and playing again."

After working and managing at the other two BB King's clubs in Memphis and in Nashville, Kalb joined the team that built this club on busy International Drive, in the Pointe Orlando complex.

"This is the biggest of the three clubs," explained Kalb. Although it has a similar layout to Memphis, this one is at least three to four times bigger. And though the one in Nashville is a full city block long, it doesn't have a second floor viewing deck." It's also the only one of the three that was built new, as the others were placed inside existing structures.

All of the clubs feature the quirky Sorrento paintings and have a similar style of décor, but Kalb said they each have their own distinct feel. "You

know, we went for an older, kind of bluesier, weathered look here. We didn't want it to appear brand new and shiny looking – even though it is brand new and shiny."

### Food & Drink

The club holds a crowd of 700 seated guests inside, with four full-service bars – two downstairs, one upstairs and one outside in the patio area that also features tables and a second stage as needed. Guests can order standard drinks or choose from a variety of specialty ones with names like Alley Cat and Lucille (of course) served in take-home hurricane glasses.

Low and high-top tables dot the rustic-looking wooden floors. And for true comfort, a lounge area upstairs is tucked into a corner with couches and oversized leather chairs.

The menu, said to be inspired by some of BB's favorite dishes, is full of Southern-influenced comfort food, including fried green tomatoes and catfish, Carolina barbecue-glazed salmon and home-made banana bread pudding.

For guests who want to take a little of the club home with them, bottles of the distinctive barbecue sauce are sold

### Ticket Information

**Hours:** The bar opens up at 3 p.m. for drinks, with the kitchen opening at 4 p.m. A full-service dinner menu is served 4 to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. A light, late-night menu follows, depending on the crowd.

**Music:** The bands play from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

**Cover Charge:** After 7:30 p.m., it's \$5 most nights, \$10 on nights with special guests.

**Parking:** There is a large parking garage at Pointe Orlando. Remember to bring in your ticket, as the club will validate for guests who eat on site.

**The club can be reached at:**  
407-370-4550  
[www.bbkingclubs.com](http://www.bbkingclubs.com)



Photo by Kevin Westenburg





PHOTO BY MATT ROSEBOOM

**COMFORTABLE CLUB:** The atmosphere at BB King's is cozy and welcoming. Anyone can enjoy the food and live musical performances.

in a retail shop just inside the entry, along with T-shirts, hats, posters and even guitar picks and drum sticks.

## Blues Beats

What the club is most known for, however, is its rollicking music. Every night of the week, it comes alive with a variety of live performances. The 11-piece BB King All Star Band (including a horn section and four lead singers) plays Tuesday to Saturday nights, preceded by the Pure Blues Band on Fridays and Saturdays, and "Beautiful" Bobby Blackmon plays Sundays and Mondays. Earlier on Sundays, the club often partners with the Orlando Blues Society to host various events, which have included Blues Jams, a young guns guitar showcase, and an evening with the Ladies of the Blues Society.

"And then we also mix it up every once in a while and throw in national acts such as Cowboy Mouth, the amazing blues guitar player Stacy Mitchhart, and Guitar Shorty," said Kalb.

"I was in town by myself for a conference and really like the blues," said Jason Harris of Philadelphia, Pa. "So this was a good excuse to get out of the hotel and grab some food and a drink, hear some live music and just relax." While there, he enjoyed the ribs ("A huge serving!") and sweet tea. "As a former Southern resident, I really

appreciated that," he said with a laugh. "I also really liked the musicianship of the Pure Blues Band and the woman singer from the All Stars. She can belt it out!"

Meredith McNiece of Altamonte Springs, Fla., agreed and said she especially liked the club's set-up, which reminded her of BB King's Memphis, which she visited several years ago. "It feels like an upscale, yet comfortable club with great seats that are really close to the stage. You can even make eye contact with the band, which gives it a more intimate feel. It's just a lights-down-low, movin' and groovin' joint."

## Coming Right Up

In the future, Kalb said they're planning on bringing in "a lot more bigger name national acts." And they're toying with the idea of adding a reggae area outside.

They also offer specials during most holidays, and hold a competition every five or six weeks for local bartenders to show off their bottle flipping skills. "Our Web site is updated constantly," said Kalb. "So check it often to see the latest news. Or feel free to call."

He concluded, "I would say that we have a unique club to the Orlando area – a full-service restaurant, bar, and nightclub with amazing music on a consistent basis. So you're really getting

three experiences. You know, BB King is the king of the blues. And with that name, comes excellence. And that's what we strive to provide – excellent food and service and music."





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A COSTUMED CAST OF CHARACTERS FROM...

# MEGACON 2009

**EACH YEAR, FANS OF COMIC BOOKS, VIDEO GAMES, SCI-FI, AND FANTASY DESCEND UPON ORLANDO TO ATTEND MEGAICON AT THE ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER. MANY ARRIVE IN COSTUME, DRESSED AS THEIR FAVORITE HEROES, VILLAINS, AND OTHER COMIC, MOVIE, & TELEVISION CHARACTERS.**



## MEGAICON ATTENDEE PROFILE

**NAMES:** EDDIE / SABRE / CHRISSY

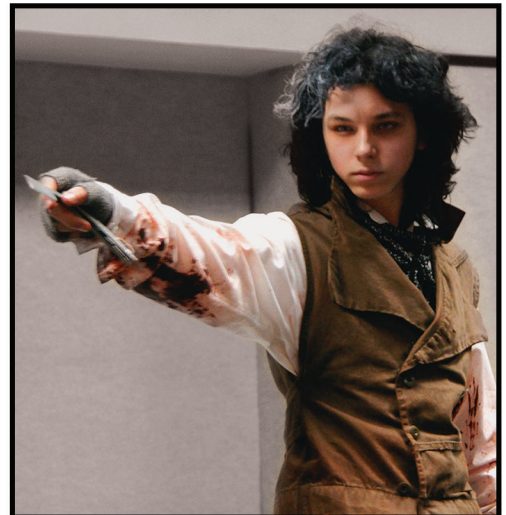
**CURRENT IDENTITIES:** THE RIDDLER / THE JOKER / POISON IVY

**HOMETOWN:** TAMPA, FL

Eddie has been costuming for over 20 years and has created more outfits than he can remember. He chose to be the Riddler this year to accompany his two Batman-themed friends. This was Chrissy's second time visiting MegaCon and she attends to "be with friends, be in costume, just have a good time, show off some of our skills." Sabre adds, "I come here and I play the Joker and have a good time and I p\*ss off all of the heroes." He followed that statement by demonstrating the use of his hand buzzer coupled with a maniacal, and yet quite natural laugh. The three have visited several other conventions in the past including DragonCon in Atlanta and the Florida SuperCon.



**ATTENDEES SHOW OFF IN THE MEGAICON COSTUME CONTEST. BEST SUPERHERO WENT TO ICEMAN (REAL NAME: ROGER HANSON FROM BROOKLYN, NY). COSTUMES SPAN MANY GENRES, FROM INDIANA JONES TO SWEENEY TODD.**





## MEGACon ATTENDEE PROFILE

### NAMES:

KIMBERLY BALEVRE  
PATRICK CREEL

### CURRENT IDENTITIES:

SPECIAL AGENT DANA SCULLY  
SPECIAL AGENT FOX MULDER

### HOMETOWNS:

TAMPA, FL  
FT. LAUDERDALE, FL

Much like the X-Files characters they are dressed as, Patrick and Kimberly have a budding relationship first formed when they met at the FX International convention in Orlando in 2008. Patrick, who usually dresses as a Ghostbuster, was happy to find costume-aficionado Kimberly, who has attended conventions as a variety of other redheads including Jessica Rabbit, Kim Possible and X-Men's Phoenix. Patrick cherishes the friendships he has made at MegaCon and other conventions, "You find a camaraderie sometimes with somebody that dresses the same way - wears the same costume - you bump into yourself, I guess. It gives you something to talk about."



**EVEN SUPERMAN CAN BE A FAN, SEEN HERE (REAL NAME: DANNY KELLEY) MEETING SMALLVILLE STAR PHILLIP MORRIS.**

**SOME MEGACon ATTENDEES SHOW UP AS THEIR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD CHARACTERS, LIKE THE ABOVE-PICTURED SESAME STREET MARTIAN.**

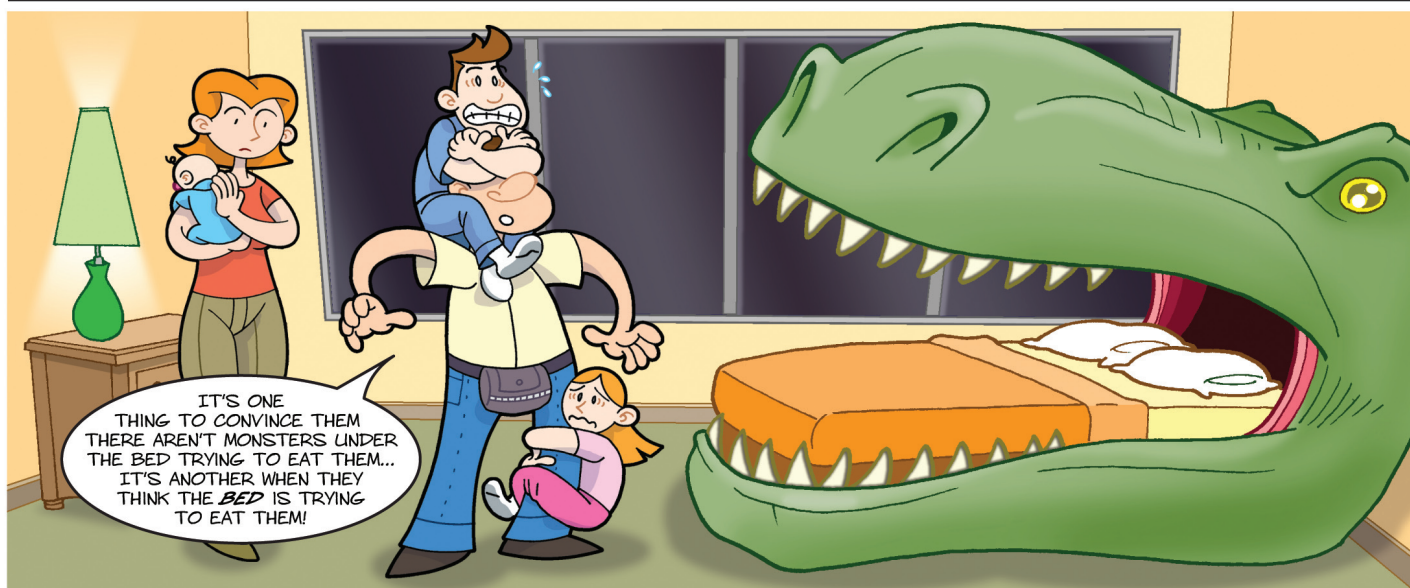
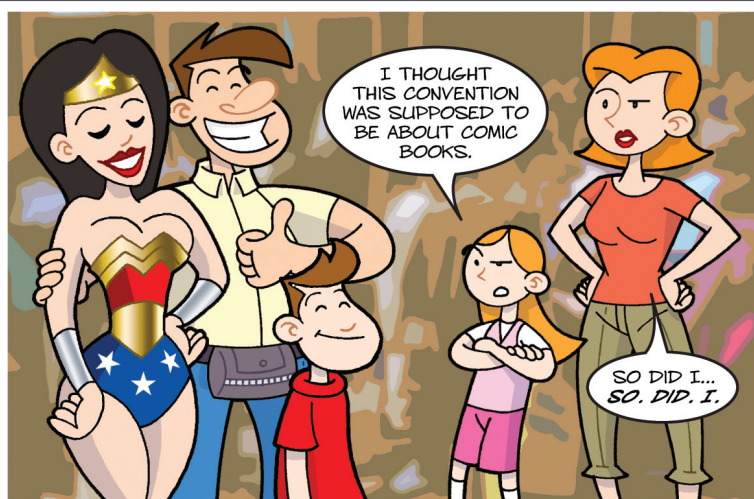


**SEE YOU AT MEGACon NEXT YEAR...**



# BEAMUSEMENT PARK

by John Green  
& Pat Lewis





# SPOT the DiFFeRence

American Idol winners David Cook and Carrie Underwood rode Disney's Rock 'n' Roller Coaster in the front row together just a couple of hours following their first-ever duet performance as part of The American Idol Experience world premiere event.

**Can you find all 10 differences between these two pictures?**



1. Extra yellow line on ground near coaster car. 2. Extra wheel on ground near coaster car. 3. Front license plate text changed to "UNDERWOOD" a last name combination given to David Cook and Carrie Underwood by fans discussing the video we uploaded of the pair's duet performance (youtube.com/attractionsmagazine to watch it). 4. David Cook's fingers are no longer pointing up. 5. Extra metallic trim along the side of the front coaster car. 6. Missing "3" plaques on the front coaster car. 7. Missing poster on the brick wall behind the coaster car. 8. Extra lights added along the vertical post behind the coaster car. 9. The color of the tie worn by the guy seated behind David Cook changed to black. 10. David Cook's bracelet removed from his left arm.



# World's First Whopper Bar Opens at Universal CityWalk

**Burger King takes "Have It Your Way" to a whole new level.**

**B**urger King Corporation officially opened the world's first Whopper Bar restaurant at Universal CityWalk on March 10. The Whopper Bar offers guests a customizable Whopper-based menu.

"This concept allows us to deliver America's favorite burger in a completely personalized and premium way, and serves as a unique 'innovation lab' for new burgers," said Russ Klein, president, global marketing, strategy and innovation, Burger King Corp.

Burger-lovers can now select from a Whopper sandwich, Double Whopper or the new Steakhouse XT with an extra-thick patty – and then choose from 22 different toppings.



**ABOVE:** The King and his "Whopper Girls" helped open the world's first Whopper Bar.



**RIGHT:** Sharing the space in a food-court-like setting with the Whopper Bar are Moe's Southwest Grill and Panda Express, which opened the same week as the new Burger King eatery.

**Visit [attractionsmagazine.com](http://attractionsmagazine.com) for a video and more photos from the Whopper Bar grand opening.**

## MYSTERY PHOTO



### WIN A PRIZE!

Tell us where this photo was taken and you could win two tickets to Wet 'n Wild! To enter, e-mail your answer to [mystery@attractionsmagazine.com](mailto:mystery@attractionsmagazine.com)

Hint: Tinker Bell usually flies over the Magic Kingdom but here she is permanently stuck high up in this busy location.

The deadline for entries is May 10, 2009. One answer allowed per person, per issue. Please include your name, mailing address and telephone number with your answer. Everyone who submits the correct location will go into a drawing. One person, randomly selected from all correct entries, will win a prize. We reserve the right to publish the names of all who submit the correct location. One winner per household allowed every six months.

## LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY PHOTO



Congratulations to Mitchell Elling of Aurora, Colo., who correctly guessed last issue's Mystery Photo location. The correct answer is the Mitsukoshi Department Store in the Japan Pavilion at Epcot. Mitchell will receive a Discovery Cove prize package.



## Attraction News from Outside the Orlando Area

By Andy Guinigundo

### Kalahari Dries Off

**Wisconsin Dells, Wis.** — Wisconsin Dells is referred to as The Water Park Capital of the World with more than 20 water parks, most with both indoor and outdoor facilities. The Kalahari Resort upped the ante in December with the addition of a 110,000-square-foot indoor “dry” amusement park to complement their water parks. The \$20 million park boasts a six-story ferris wheel, climbing walls, go cart track, elevated ropes course and a carousel.

### Saw — The Ride



**Chertsey, U.K.** — Horror film fans rejoice (or scream). The first ever horror movie-themed roller coaster will debut in March when Thorpe Park opens for the season. The ride, like the movie, promises many twists, turns and terror. Saw — The Ride will include a beyond vertical 100 degree drop and three inversions. The drop will be the steepest in the world. Thorpe Park sits 20 miles outside of central London and is accessible by public transit.

### Unique Roller Coaster?

**Staffordshire, U.K.** — Alton Towers, Europe’s most visited theme park, recently announced a new roller coaster. This announcement comes on the heels of the closing of the classic Corkscrew that was Europe’s first double helix coaster. The \$17 million project carries the mysterious code name “Secret Weapon Six.” Alton Towers officials vaguely describe the new ride as “the world’s first roller coaster of its kind.” It is to be completed by 2010.

### Asia to Get 3rd Disneyland?

**Shanghai, China** — The on again, off again, previously vehemently denied news of a Chinese mainland Disney park appears to be on again for now. Mayor

Han Zheng of Shanghai held a press conference in January announcing that an agreement involving the “major issues” had been reached with Disney. Reports state that the park would be built in the suburbs of the Pudong area of Shanghai.

### Rebuilding of Universal Movie Lot



**Universal City, Calif.** — Fire swept through the working movie sets of the Universal Studios Hollywood backlot a bit over a year ago. Rebuilding is well underway. Classic sets such as Courthouse Square (*Back to the Future*) are being rebuilt. New sets, such as a contemporary cityscape, are also being constructed. Universal guests will be able to tour these areas beginning in mid-summer.

### Singapore to Get Transformers First

**Sentosa, Singapore** — Universal Studios Singapore will reportedly open the Transformers 3D-HD ride a few months before Universal Studios Hollywood. The ride is described as being the first of its kind in the world. Transformers movie director Michael Bay and Steven Spielberg have served as consultants. The Transformers ride is expected to open in Singapore around 2011.

### Farewell Golden Nugget

**Wildwood, N. J.** — The Golden Nugget was a classic New Jersey boardwalk gold mine-themed roller coaster/dark ride. It was a part of the Hunt’s Pier landscape for 48 years. Knoebels Amusement Resort in Pennsylvania has purchased the remnants but no immediate plans were announced other than to say that it would be a 2010 project at the earliest.

### Dubai Theme Parks On Hold

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates** — A year ago, plans were in the works in Dubai that would make it the most theme park dense area in the world. With falling gas prices and credit difficulties, many of the theme parks and other developments have been put on hold or cancelled outright. Busch Entertain-

ment had plans to create four separate parks on a man-made Shamu-shaped island. The economy and Busch ownership issues have shelved these plans. Property values in Dubai are down as much as 25 percent and there is an estimated \$263 billion of projects on hold in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

### Lincoln is Back

**Anaheim, Calif.** — The Disneyland Story, featuring Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln will soon make its debut at Disneyland. The original “Great Moments” first appeared at the New York World’s Fair in 1964 at the State of Illinois booth. This original production by Walt himself was the first in the world to feature a fully animated human Audio-Animatronics figure. The show first appeared at the Opera House in Disneyland in 1965.

### Small World, Big Change



**Anaheim, Calif.** — On Feb. 6, the famous It’s a Small World boat ride reopened at Disneyland California. The ride now features new boats, a new Spirit of America scene, a rerecorded soundtrack, and the biggest change, 29 Disney characters inserted into the country scenes where their movie takes place. For example, Lilo and Stitch now appear in the Hawaii scene.

### Lego Obama

**Carlsbad, Calif.** — Months before this year’s Presidential Inauguration, master model designers at Legoland California were hard at work to accurately re-create the moment. Approximately 1,000 LEGO figures were placed including President Obama, Aretha Franklin, Yo-Yo-Ma, Oprah and former President Bush. To ensure accuracy, after the first family’s outfits were observed on Inauguration Day, the figures were altered to reflect the colors. The scene is so detailed, that one can spot the “portapotties” in the scene.





*Disney's Hollywood Studios  
February 2009*



**T**he world premiere event at Disney's Hollywood Studios for The American Idol Experience brought celebrities and media from around the world. After the finale show took place, invitees were welcomed to attend an after-party held along Sunset Boulevard. Many celebrities attended the party, but Mickey and Minnie Mouse, who had a long day of meeting and greeting park guests, decided to call it a night early and were spotted by our cameras skipping and holding hands. No park guests were around at the time of this photo, making it evident that the two truly do enjoy each other's company — even after more than 80 years of being together.



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